DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 355 527 CS 213 731

AUTHOR Kolanowski, Karen
TITLE Use of Portfolios in Assessment of Literature Learning. Report Series 3.7.
INSTITUTION National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning, Albany, NY.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 93
CONTRACT R117G10015
NOTE 28p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Trends; Foreign Countries; National Surveys; *Portfolios (Background Materials); Secondary Education; *Student Evaluation; Teacher Effectiveness; Writing Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS Alternative Assessment; Canada; Educational Issues

ABSTRACT

This report contains the results of a survey designed to gather information on issues and concerns in portfolio assessment and on the use of such types of assessment to determine student performance and program or teaching effectiveness. The survey, which contained nine questions, was conducted in three phases. First, the testing directors of each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and each of the 8 Canadian provinces were surveyed by telephone. Phase 2 of the survey examined more specific questions: individual contact people provided by the state testing directors were mailed abbreviated surveys requesting answers to questions 8 and 9 concerning, respectively, the forms and uses of portfolio assessment and how these uses relate to program objectives. Phase 3 consisted of telephone conversations with 10 respondents who indicated that they were using portfolios in the assessment of literature learning and a review of articles and descriptive information provided by those 10 respondents. Results indicated that: (1) in Canada, only Quebec was using portfolios for provincewide use in the 1990-91 school year, while in the United States, Kentucky and Vermont were planning to implement statewide use in the near future; (2) greater use was being made of portfolios at the classroom level, and, in a few situations, portfolios were being used at the school and district level; (3) there was little universality in the manner in which portfolios were being used; (4) writing as a response to literature was a component of about 25% of the portfolio programs; and (5) assessment by the use of portfolios exemplified program goals which stressed active learning. (Two tables of data are included; the list of interview questions, the list of respondents to the survey, and an appendix of data are attached.) (RS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED355527

Use of Portfolios in Assessment of Literature Learning

Karen Kolanowski

National Research Center on
Literature Teaching & Learning
UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY • SUNY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CS213731

Literature Center

School of Education • 1400 Washington Avenue • Albany, New York 12222

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Use of Portfolios in Assessment of Literature Learning

Karen Kolanowski

National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning
University at Albany
State University of New York
1400 Washington Avenue, Albany, New York 12222

Report Series 3.7

1993

Preparation of this report was supported under the Educational Research and Development Center Program (Grant number R117G10015) as administered by the Office of Research, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. The findings and opinions expressed here do not neccessarily reflect the position or policies of the sponsoring agency.

National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning

The National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning is a research and development center located at the University at Albany, State University of New York. The Center was established in 1987 (as the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature), and in January 1991 began a new, five-year cycle of work sponsored by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. The Center's mission is to conduct research and sponsor activities to improve the teaching of literature, preschool through grade 12, in schools across the nation.

Center-sponsored research falls into three broad areas: teaching and learning processes, curriculum and assessment, and social and cultural traditions in the teaching and learning of literature. Special attention is given to the role of literature in the teaching and learning of students at risk for school failure, and to the development of higher-level literacy skills, literary understanding, and critical thinking skills in all students.

For information on current publications and activities, write to: Literature Center, School of Education, University at Albany, 1400 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12222.

Use of Portfolios in Assessment of Literature Learning

Karen Kolanowski
New York State Education Department

This report contains the results of a survey conducted by the National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning to gather information on issues and concerns in portfolio assessment and on the current use of such types of assessment to determine student performance and program or teaching effectiveness. The survey focused on assessment in the language arts and, specifically, literature at the secondary school level (grades 7 through 12).

Background

Present Study

This study is part of a series of studies designed to provide models and discuss issues surrounding particular approaches to portfolio assessment. This research is intended to give "a state of the art" overview of the benefits and issues to be confronted in implementing portfolio assessment in the teaching and learning of literature.

Prior Research of the Center

The studies in this project are intended to be an extension of the Center's previous work on assessment in the classroom and in state and other large-scale assessments. In the course of its first three years, the Center pursued a series of studies of assessment of the domain of literature learning (Brody, DeMilo, & Purves, 1989; Purves, Li, & Shirk, 1990). Approaching the problem from both a theoretical and empirical perspective, the researchers found that the domain of school literature could be divided into three interrelated aspects: knowledge, practice, and preference. The research and policy problem arising from the first three years of the Center's work on assessment has become one of helping various communities, both local and state, define more clearly their norms and standards, and adjust their assessment to fit those definitions. To rely on existing tests or published tests may severely misrepresent the performance of students, especially if the assessment is inconsistent with the curricular aims of the community, particularly the community of literature teachers (Archbald & Newman, 1988; Johnston, Weiss, & Afflerbach, 1990; New Zealand Department of Education, 1989).

Portfolio Assessment

Critics of traditional forms of assessment, particularly standardized multiple-choice tests, have expressed a need for alternative forms of assessment. One criticism posed has been that traditional tests have neglected to evaluate the kinds of competence expressed in "real-life" situations beyond school such as those encountered by writers, businesspeople, scientists, community leaders, and craftspeople (Archbald & Newman, 1988; Shepard, 1989; Wiggins, 1989).

Archbald and Newman (1988) suggest that informative assessment of authentic achievement should consist of tasks that meet at least three criteria: disciplined inquiry, integration of knowledge, and value beyond evaluation. Three types of assessment which they suggest fit those criteria are discrete competency tasks, exhibitions, and portfolios and profiles.

Portfolios may be broadly defined as a collection of representative work. Archbald and Newman (1988) suggest that portfolios may include summarized descriptions of accomplishments such as samples of writing; audio, video, and photographic recordings of performances and projects; and testimonies from authorities about the quality of student work. Formal records such as transcripts, evidence of membership in organizations, lists of awards, and letters of recommendation may also be included along with students' reflections on their own learning.

Portfolios have long been used by artists and models. In the 1970s with the influx of part-time older students in colleges and universities, portfolio assessment became a mechanism for the evaluation of prior learning of experienced adult students.

Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of the present survey was to gather information on issues and concerns in portfolio assessment and on the current use of such types of assessment to determine student performance and program or teaching effectiveness.

The survey was undertaken in three phases. Phase one consisted of a telephone survey of the testing directors of each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and each of the 8 Canadian provinces. The telephone calls were made primarily in May 1991. The directors were asked questions concerning their 1990-91 language arts assessment programs in the secondary grades to determine if portfolios were being used on a statewide or provincewide basis. In the event that portfolios were not being used on a statewide or provincewide basis, the testing directors were asked to supply the names of representatives of four districts or schools who might be contacted about the use of portfolios at that level. The specific questions asked appear in Appendix 1. During the summer each testing director was sent a written copy of his/her answers to survey questions 4, 5, and 6 in order to confirm the information provided. In addition, state language arts directors were contacted by telephone for the purpose of obtaining additional names of representatives of districts, schools, or teachers.

Phase two of the survey concerned obtaining answers to more specific questions

concerning the actual use of portfolios. The individual contact people provided by the state testing directors and language arts directors were mailed abbreviated surveys which requested answers to questions 8 and 9. These surveys were mailed in late May and early June of 1991. A second mailing was sent in the fall of 1991 to those individuals who did not reply to the first request.

Phase three consisted of telephone conversations with ten respondents who indicated that they were using portfolios in the assessment of literature learning and a review of articles and descriptive information provided by those ten respondents.

Phase One: Results of State/Province Survey

In Phase one, fifty states, eight provinces, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia were contacted. For the 1990-91 school year, 47 of the 60 entities contacted had a statewide/provincewide assessment or testing program for secondary school students (Grades 7-12) in the language arts. (One state conducts statewide testing every three years. Even though testing did not occur during the 1990-91 school year due to the three-year cycle, that state was counted as having a statewide testing program.) A summary of the grade levels which are tested appears in Table 1. As indicated on the table, the bulk of testing occurs in grades 8, 9, 10, and 11. Testing peaks in grade 11 and occurs least often in grade 12.

****

Table 1

Grade Levels for Statewide/Provincewide Language Arts
Assessment Programs for the 1990-91 School Year

Grade Level	Number of Programs
Grade 7	12
Grade 8	24
Grade 9	20
Grade 10	20
Grade 11	26
Grade 12	9

****

Of the states/provinces which have a testing or assessment program in the language arts at the secondary level, only Quebec was using portfolios as a component of a statewide/provincewide program during the 1990-91 school year. Although Vermont pilot tested

portfolios in approximately half the eighth-grade classes in the state, the actual statewide assessment program was not planned to be in place until the 1991-92 school year. California also had pilot tested the statewide use of portfolios but had yet to incorporate them into the statewide program. Kentucky was planning to begin using portfolios in statewide assessment of the language arts in 1992. At the secondary level, students in grades 8 and 12 were to be involved in that program.

As illustrated in Table 2, greater use of portfolios occurs at the district, school, and class levels than at the state level. It should be noted that the directors' knowledge of portfolio use at the various levels differed from state to state and province to province. Some had more specific knowledge than others, therefore, the numbers provided are estimates intended to provide a general impression of portfolio use.

****

Table 2
Portfolio Use for Assessment Purposes in 1990-91

Level	Number of States/Provinces
State/province level	1
District level	19
School level	29
Class level	43

****

The state directors in Alaska, California, Indiana, and Utah indicated that their state education departments were collaborating with specific schools or districts in the use of portfolios for assessment purposes. In 1991-92, Ontario was to begin collecting portfolios from a small sample of 12th graders as part of an assessment project.

Thirty five of the state/province directors provided the names of 93 individuals at the local level to be contacted. As part of Phase two, 55 of those 93 individuals responded. Only forty-one of those surveys were usable because the others were in the beginning stages of exploring portfolio use and could not complete the survey at this point. Respondents came from 26 of the 60 states and provinces.

Summary of Information Concerning Portfolio Use on a Statewide/Provincewide Level

In the 1990-91 school year, the majority of states in the United States and of provinces in Canada were using some form of language arts assessment at the secondary level. However, portfolio assessment was a component of only one of those assessment programs. While two states

were planning to implement statewide portfolio assessment in the near future, more use was being made of portfolios at the local level than at the state level.

Phase Two: Results of Survey Concerning Portfolio Use at the Local Level

The second phase of the project provided more detailed information concerning portfolio use at the local level. In a few cases portfolios were being used districtwide, but the primary use was by individual classroom teachers. The responses to the survey questions (Appendix 1) provide a realistic picture of portfolio use at the local level. The forty-one respondents represent a broad overview of what is being done in the United States and Canada. Appendix 2 provides a listing of participants.

The responses to the survey questions provide a range of information concerning portfolio use in the schools. While some questions generated quantifiable answers, most lent themselves more to a descriptive summary. The responses indicate that portfolios are most often tailored to the purpose of the teacher or the district and, therefore, tend to be highly individualized. While patterns of responses are listed where evident, examples of as many responses as possible are also provided. Since the variety of responses clearly indicates that there are multiple ways to use portfolios, it would be unfair to ignore the diversity of purposes, organizational patterns, and uses for portfolios.

Forms and Uses of Assessment

What areas of the language arts are included in the portfolio?

The intent of this question was to determine whether writing, reading, listening, and/or speaking were included in the portfolios. While the majority of respondents did answer in that manner, others listed course names. Obviously a course such as Composition or Advanced Writing would entail writing. The components of a course such as British Literature are not as evident. However, it is probable that writing and reading would be components there also.

Those respondents who specifically mentioned a language arts area or areas always included writing as a component of the portfolio. When responses such as state essential skills, daily homework assignments, English, or Honors English were given, it may also be surmised that writing was a component there. Occasionally specific types of writing such as a response to literature or expressive or persuasive writing were given.

Many respondents also indicated that reading was included in the portfolio. Speaking was listed by five of the respondents as a portfolio component, and listening was never specifically mentioned. One respondent indicated that the visual and performing arts were included.

What does the portfolio contain?

This question drew a variety of responses and clearly exemplifies the definition of a portfolio as "a collection of work." Although all the respondents were using portfolios, what was contained in them was diverse. The responses demonstrated that there is no one way to compile work for a portfolio.

Some respondents were specific about the contents of the portfolio. Although the types of pieces were specified, the organizational patterns varied. One teacher requires a cover letter presenting the contents of the portfolio, an author's choice which includes all drafts, a response to literature, a creative piece, and a persuasive piece. Another teacher follows a similar plan including a cover letter, a short story, an informative essay, and a persuasive essay. Other teachers use different schemes for selection of portfolio contents. One includes a metacognitive letter, a "best" piece, a revision piece, and a student's choice which could come from outside of class writing. Another asks for a teacher selection, a student selection (favorite), a student-teacher selection, a satisfactory piece, and an unsatisfactory piece. One teacher's requirements are dependent on the length of the course. For one semester courses, students are asked to include one paper at the end of the first quarter which has gone through the entire writing process and two other papers of students' own choosing. For the second quarter, two papers which have gone through the entire writing process and one other paper are included. For a year-long course, students are asked to include three papers which have gone through the entire writing process.

In the cases where a district longitudinal portfolio is kept, the requirements are different for the class portfolio/folder and the district portfolio. Generally a small number of pieces from the class portfolio are selected for inclusion in the district one. In one district, where a K-12 language arts portfolio is kept, students add one polished piece and one impromptu piece each year. Writing assessment essays are also included for those years when they are administered. In another district, a specimen of student work is added when the student has demonstrated mastery of one of 32 "essential skills." Mastery is defined by the district as the attainment of a grade equivalent to "C" on a product such as a piece of writing or a test. As a recordkeeping measure, a chart of skills is included in the longitudinal folder. The skills are checked off as mastery is demonstrated.

Some responses were less specific than those provided above. Several teachers indicated that finished works along with drafts are included. Goal statements and student self-evaluations were also mentioned. A typical response: "Pieces of writing, written responses to literature, work from any discipline (anything that shows who the student is as a literate person). They are the works the students consider best from a variety of pieces produced during specific time periods." Other elements mentioned by respondents, although not necessarily typical, included scribbles and ideas, notes from peers, recordkeeping worksheets, video and audiotapes, journals, labels, clippings, exhibits, computer printouts, class handouts, personal interest and attitude surveys, awards, reading records, photo artifacts, and test information.

How many pieces are included in the portfolio?

The number of pieces included in the portfolios ranged from 2 to 50, with 3 through 15 being most common. A response as high as 50 was unusual.

A few respondents made a distinction between a working folder and a final portfolio. In some cases students keep a working folder during the year which contains all pieces of writing. At the end of the semester or year, a smaller number of pieces is selected for inclusion in the final portfolio for that course. This is also the case when a cumulative district folder is kept. In that case, a smaller classroom portfolio might also be compiled, so that there might be as many as three versions of the portfolio for any one student.

Who selects the pieces?

Half of the respondents indicated that students and teachers together select pieces for the portfolio. Several respondents who used student and teacher input in the selection process indicated that the student's decision carries more weight. Some typical comments were: "Students and teachers collaborate, but ultimately it is the student's decision"; "The teacher assigns most of the topics and helps the student decide what is exemplary, but the student makes the ultimate decision"; and "Final creative pieces to be sent in the portfolio to the next level are student selected, other information is at the teacher's discretion." One respondent also included parents in the selection process.

Slightly less than half indicated that the student was solely responsible for selecting pieces for the portfolio. However, as indicated above, the students' choices carry more weight even when the pieces are selected in collaboration with others.

Only two respondents indicated that teachers alone selected the pieces to be included.

How are they rated or scored?

Many respondents indicated that individual pieces are rated, but did not specifically mention how the portfolio is treated as a whole. The inference may be that the portfolios are generally not rated as separate entities. However, several respondents were more specific concerning this issue. One superintendent indicated that a piece is included in the portfolio if it demonstrates minimal mastery of a skill. Therefore, the portfolio as a whole serves as a record of the number of skills that are mastered by graduation. A few others indicated that completeness and fulfillment of the requirements are the basic criteria.

One teacher stated that "writing samples are scored individually. The portfolios are reviewed by the teacher to assess growth over the year." Several others follow a similar procedure except that students assess their own growth:

> Separate pieces are graded on process-content-mechanics. At the end of the year students rank all their best pieces from most to least effective and discuss, in a

self-evaluation, their own growth. Portfolios as a whole are not rated or scored.

Another teacher indicated that "initially points are given on many pieces while some are not rated at all. At the end of the year the student writes a reflective letter explaining his choices and himself as a writer."

Holistic rating of portfolios was mentioned by a few respondents. In one case the portfolio is rated by a graduation committee on a scoring grid of Distinguished, Satisfactory Plus, Satisfactory or Minimally Satisfactory.

Various rating systems are used for individual pieces. Pieces are rated holistically or analytically. Primary trait scoring is the least commonly used method of rating. In some cases pieces are reviewed by the students' peers.

Student input was specifically mentioned by about one-third of the respondents whether in regard to rating individual pieces or the portfolio as a whole. In one case where holistic scoring was used, the scoring guide is reviewed each semester on the basis of student input. In another case, analytic criteria are developed by the student and teacher. In another instance, students and the teacher write captions and anecdotal comments about strengths and weaknesses. In general, scored pieces are samples of writing; there was little reference to scoring other artifacts.

What happens to the results?

About one-third of those responding indicated that the portfolios are used in calculating students' final grades for the course. In most of these cases, the portfolio is only one component of the grade.

Several respondents wrote that portfolios are used for formative assessment purposes. One teacher stated that they are used to improve writing and thinking. Another indicated that the results are given to students so that they can work with a consultant in the writing center on specific problems. Another indicated that the portfolios are used for intervention and literacy development and individualized instructional strategies. Several respondents mentioned that the portfolios are shared with parents and others such as the school board.

About one-fourth of the responses dealt with the physical aspects of the portfolio program. If a longitudinal portfolio is kept for the student, some selected pieces are kept at the end of the year, while the remainder of pieces in the class portfolio are returned to the student. When longitudinal portfolios are kept, they are returned when the student graduates. Individual teachers also indicated they passed the portfolios on to the next teacher or sent them home with the students at the end of the school year.

How is the portfolio related to other tests such as standardized tests and classroom tests?

The responses to this question were nearly evenly divided between two categories: the portfolio is used in conjunction with tests and other types of assessment, and the portfolio is not related to standardized or classroom tests. A small group of respondents indicated that tests were a part of the portfolio.

The respondents who used portfolios in conjunction with other assessment devices tended to express the advantages of multiple measures. One respondent stated, "The portfolio is another slice of student writing and progress. It is part of the picture." Another indicated that classroom tests evaluate skills being developed in the portfolio while yet another expressed the converse opinion: "The portfolio includes writing of various types as covered in the English curriculum guide which matches the standardized tests used."

The second large group of respondents stated that the portfolios were not related to classroom or standardized tests. Several indicated that the portfolio was used in lieu of tests. One respondent wrote that the portfolio "is not related to other tests. The students view them as separate entities--as theirs--and therefore, their real writing. Standardized tests are for unknown audiences, therefore 'school work.'"

Relation to Objectives

How did you determine that a portfolio was useful?

The responses in this section followed two paths, one general and the other more specific. Those giving more general responses indicated that they came to use portfolios through research, studying, reading, and theory. Several respondents indicated that projects such as the New York City Writing Project, the Central Wisconsin Writing Project, Arts Propel, and the Bay Area Writing Project served as helpful resources.

Those respondents who gave more specific responses mentioned a general dissatisfaction with traditional methods of assessment and a desire to find something more useful for their own purposes. One teacher stated, "I was frustrated with the tests in British Literature and one draft essays in my writing classes, so I turned to portfolios."

In most cases, the decision to use portfolios appeared to be an evolutionary process which was reflected in one teacher's comment that: "this was a natural evolution for us as we began to individualize instruction and use authentic assessments." Many teachers responded that portfolios better served their purposes in assessing mastery or outcomes. They served as documentation that goals have been met. Most important, for many teachers, was that portfolios allowed the students and others to see growth over a period of time.

Respondents didn't seem to connect their desire for a better assessment method with current research; at least the responses did not illustrate this connection.

How are portfolios related to program goals?

In general, the teachers responding felt that there was a high correlation between portfolios and program goals. Some indicated that the portfolio was a means of determining if program goals were being met. One typical response was that "the portfolio helped define and shape program goals and has promoted discussion of those goals." Another respondent stated, "I build my portfolios around course goals and ask students to determine mastery of those goals in their portfolios."

Although specific program goals were mentioned only on occasion, active learning was the most common goal given. "Portfolios show the students as risk-takers, decision-makers, and reflective learners."

How is the portfolio used to teach writing and literature?

Respondents used the portfolio as a teaching tool in a variety of ways. One teacher commented that the portfolios "are an integral part of instruction and assessment. Individual student needs are identified. The student sets his/her own goals and instruction is based on the student's needs and goals."

In many cases the portfolios are used to determine student growth and progress through the year. By determining strengths and weaknesses along the way, instruction is tailored to the individual student's needs. One teacher writes captions on student pieces "indicating areas that yet need attention, literary elements unknown, or reading/writing processes yet unmastered or unsuccessful for students." Peer input is also important. In one case, "response groups examine the portfolio of every other student in class. Students use their portfolios to revise their writing and reflect on their learning."

In some situations portfolios are used as a management tool. One teacher wrote, "Students must learn management of their own work, how to organize, save, and rewrite." Another stated, "It [the portfolio] is simply to gather/choose/accumulate best work as opposed to work in progress."

Respondents were generally not specific about ways that portfolios helped in the teaching of writing or literature. A few did indicate some connection with the teaching of writing and literature, such as "it was useful in teaching criticism of literature" or "much of the writing we do is connected to the literature--they [the students], therefore, may select to show themselves as readers as well as writers."

A few teachers did not specifically indicate how portfolios were used for instructional purposes in their own classes, but indicated that passing the portfolios on to the next teacher helps those teachers gear their instruction to students' strengths and weaknesses.

A small minority of respondents stated that the portfolios were not used for instructional purposes at all.

Is the portfolio used primarily for student assessment? How is growth or progress determined?

Nearly all those responding to the survey indicated that portfolios were used for student assessment purposes. Additionally, several specifically stated that the portfolios were used for both assessment and diagnostic purposes. In one or two cases, it appeared that teachers interpreted assessment in terms of summative assessment and were actually using the portfolios for formative assessment.

The responses concerning how student growth and progress were determined varied and, in fact, were often similar to the responses given as to how the portfolio was related to program goals. Progress is determined in a variety of ways largely depending on the purpose of the portfolio. In one case, progress is demonstrated if the basic essential skills are mastered. In another, pre and postinstruction writing samples are evaluated through a rubric. Another teacher indicated that progress is determined in relation to identified needs and student goals.

In many cases, teachers indicated that the portfolio provides the student with an opportunity to view his or her own growth. One teacher specified that "teachers and students work together to develop criteria based on the curriculum for evaluating individual pieces. Read arounds and peer discussion groups help focus on growth. The students chart their own progress." Other respondents who indicated that growth was determined by the students themselves stated that the reflective letters or students' self-assessments were critical factors.

Are portfolios used primarily for program assessment? If so, how are strengths and weaknesses determined?

Very few respondents indicated that the portfolios were used primarily for program assessment. However, some did state that program assessment was a secondary factor in the use of portfolios. This program assessment was generally conducted informally. One teacher stated that informal conversations while rating allowed teachers to compare their classes. Another indicated the portfolio is used "more for program direction because it becomes the curriculum and, therefore, some program assessment and adjustment comes from that." Another responded that trends in topics and writing development are indicated through the use of the portfolios. This information is then used by curriculum planners to revise the curriculum. One teacher stated that the portfolios make clear which activities make a difference to the students.

In one case the portfolios were being used for program assessment purposes:

> Strengths and weaknesses are determined by the holistic evaluation set forth. In addition, the following areas are compared: The percent of students evaluated above grade level, at grade level, below grade level, or remedial; percent of students showing a definite sense of paragraphing; the length of papers using word count analysis; and the number of errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization using error count per one hundred words.

A few respondents indicated a desire to use the portfolios for program assessment purposes in the future.

Summary of Responses to Survey Questions

The survey responses provided an overview of the diversity of purposes for using portfolios and ways in which portfolios are being used. Only a few of the questions posed generated a consensus. Writing seems to be the mainstay of the portfolio programs, but other areas such as reading and speaking are included to some extent. There is a high level of student involvement in the selection of the portfolio contents. However, this responsibility is often shared by others, particularly teachers but occasionally by parents and peers. In the area of program goals, there was generally a high correlation between portfolio use and program goals. The vast majority of respondents used portfolios primarily for student assessment rather than for program assessment.

A review of the information generated by the survey showed that it provides good general starting point, but in several areas failed to provide sufficient information about important aspects of portfolio use. One of those important areas was the specific use of portfolios to assess literature learning. In order to gain more information concerning this aspect of portfolio assessment and to gain a better overall picture of portfolio use at the district, school, and classroom level, ten respondents who indicated that they were using portfolios in conjunction with literature learning were contacted by telephone. In addition to the telephone conversations, descriptive materials were also provided by those respondents. The next phase of the study provides information compiled from those conversations and materials.

Phase Three: Portfolios for Literature Assessment

In an effort to provide more specific descriptions of how portfolios are being used in relation to the assessment of literature learning, three situations will be described--one each at the class, school, and district level. The classroom description was provided by Stevi Quate of Horizon High School, Brighton, Colorado. The term "classroom level" is used because this example provides a description of how one teacher uses portfolios in her classes. The second example is one of the program at Lathrop High School in Fairbanks, Alaska provided by Jim Villano, a Central Office language arts specialist. This program is classified as a school program because it is being used by several teachers in the school for two different courses. The third example was provided by Helen Poole, the K-12 language arts coordinator of the South Orange/Maplewood School District in New Jersey. This program is a districtwide program with participation by all language arts teachers from kindergarten through grade 12. These examples are not intended to serve as models but rather to provide a glimpse into the possible ways portfolios may be used.

Portfolios in Use

Horizon High School - Brighton, Colorado

Stevi Quate of Brighton, Colorado uses portfolios with her students in British Literature, Writing II, and in a interdisciplinary course for 10th, 11th and 12th graders heterogeneously grouped. The focal point of the portfolio is an overview piece which introduces the portfolio and reflects on the work. Students may include quotes from pieces or parts of pieces they feel are particularly strong or show growth. Students include three or four pieces or sections in their portfolios. One student may use a piece to respond to a literary question, another might use a collection of pieces to respond to the same question. For example, if the task is to demonstrate their understanding of the Romantic philosophy through writing or some other form, students might respond to that question in a variety of ways. One student might write his or her own creative piece using the Romantic philosophy. Another might use a compilation of various types of pieces. Students may choose to include a product other than a written piece. For example, one group of students videotaped a discussion they had about a particular piece of literature. They made the tape while they were sitting around a student's living room eating popcorn!

The emphasis of Ms. Quate's portfolio program is to show growth. Students are to look at the ways they demonstrate they are literate human beings. The portfolio is a collection of pieces that shows movement toward that goal. In the past, the portfolios were built around course goals and the students were asked to demonstrate mastery of those goals through their portfolios. More recently, Ms. Quate has been using a somewhat different approach. Students are asked to write a short response to a poem or a short story at the beginning of the course. These pieces are considered to be the baseline and others throughout the semester are compared to them. Each quarter students compare growth and different ways of responding to the original. Ms. Quate encourages them to move away from plot summaries to other ways of writing about literature and responding to it.

Lathrop High School - Fairbanks, Alaska

During 1989, the Alaska Department of Education offered districts seed money to begin looking at the development of alternative models of student assessment, particularly portfolio assessment. Lathrop High School was located in one of the districts receiving funding. After a year of planning and development, the portfolio assessment project was piloted.

The purpose of the project at Lathrop High School is to allow students to be accountable to a different audience, to generate student responsibility for assessing and collecting their own work, and to help students present themselves through their work. The portfolios serve as a means for teachers to assess their programs, including standards, and to assess students' performance and achievement across different ability groups and grade levels.

The portfolio project includes freshman students in a one-semester Basic Composition 1 class and junior students in a year-long Advanced Composition class. Four pieces of writing are

collected. One piece is the student's choice and must have all drafts. A second piece is writing in response to a piece of literature. The third is a creative piece. The fourth selection is a persuasive/opinion piece. A metacognitive/self-assessment letter is also included. Students do not receive credit unless they have met all the requirements. Writing is assessed using the Beaverton, Oregon Analytical Model with slight modification for the creative piece.

During the first year, the portfolios were received positively by the parents. One parent indicated that this was the first time her child had shared any of her high school work with her. The Lathrop teachers also reported a positive effect. They saw a tremendous growth in students' ability to assess their own writing. The students see the portfolio as a celebration of their writing. This sentiment is demonstrated in their cover letters.

South Orange/Maplewood, New Jersey

The South Orange/Maplewood School District in New Jersey is in the process of implementing a districtwide language arts portfolio system for grades K-12. Pilot testing was conducted during the 1990-91 school year with 24 teachers participating. All teachers were to be involved in the 1991-92 school year. Beginning in June 1992, the portfolio was also to be systematically used for program assessment.

Specific pieces of data from and about each student are collected in the portfolio. These data are used by the teacher, district, and the student to assess the student's growth in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Each student keeps a reading/writing folder in which he/she collects all reading and writing products collected over the course of the school year. Periodically, the student, with input from the teacher and/or peers, selects the materials to be included in the assessment portfolio. At the end of the year students are provided with the opportunity to reflect on growth in reading and writing. The components for grades 7 through 12 are as follows:

1. An observation checklist for grades 7 and 8. This checklist contains observable behaviors in listening, speaking, reading, and writing which have been developed for each grade level cluster. The checklist is filled out for each student by the teacher at designated times of the year. In grades 9 through 12, observational notes and comments are used.
2. Test data such as reading and language arts scores from standardized tests along with other diagnostic instruments are included.
3. A reading record of the books the student has read independently throughout the year. The student keeps this record.
4. A class reading record. The teacher records all assigned in-class reading.
5. A writing record. The student keeps a record of all pieces written during the year.
6. A written self-reflection. The student reflects on his/her growth

as a reader and writer.

7. A list of self-determined goals in reading and writing the student writes at the beginning of the school year. The self-reflection will take into account these goals.
8. One writing-to-learn strategy.

Samples of work to be included in the portfolio are as follows:

Grades 7 & 8

One sample each from the following types: expository writing, fictional narrative writing, personal writing, essay, poetry, and persuasive writing. At least one sample must include all stages of the writing process.

Grades 9 & 10

Three samples from each category, at least one must have all stages of the writing process: Literary--dramatic/interior monologue, dialogue, poem, personal narrative, memoir, character sketch, dramatic script, narrative with dialogue, fictional diary

Persuasive/Informative--letter, interview, news article, book review, informative essay, analytical/research report

Summer Reading Journal--9th graders only.

Grades 11 & 12

At least three samples from each category, at least one must have all stages of the writing process:

Literary--autobiography/memoir, fictional narrative, poem, literary addition

Persuasive/Informative--interview, report, analytic essay, expository essay, persuasive essay, expository/research, editorial, review, letter to the editor, news article

In June 1992, the program evaluation component of the program was to be implemented. A random sample of 20% of the portfolios was to be collected from students in several designated grade levels. These portfolios were to be scored according to the district's holistic scoring guides in reading and writing and will be compared to the developmentally-appropriate, grade level standards determined by the district. This sample of students will be followed as they move through the grades, their portfolios pulled and scored as they reach each designated grade level. This longitudinal study is intended to assist the district in determining if the program is meeting the needs of the students as they move through the system. Data from several standardized tests will be included also.

Helen Poole, the K-12 language arts coordinator, indicated that some revisions in the initial plan are being considered. After pilot testing, the high school teachers found the observational checklist too time consuming to use with large classes, therefore, it is being revised to make it more manageable. Questions of where to store 4,000 portfolios and how to move them from

class to class within the school and between schools within the district are still being addressed. The grade levels for the program assessment are being reconsidered.

Other Portfolio Issues

The central topic of discussion in the follow-up telephone conversations concerned obtaining more specific descriptions about the way in which portfolios were being used to assess literature learning. In addition to the three examples given above, a variety of other ways was suggested. A book analysis and a self-selected topic concerning a book were two techniques used by one teacher. A middle school teacher told how her students read the short story, "The Moustache," and wrote their own children's stories afterwards. Other approaches used by the same teacher involved the more direct approach of comparing and contrasting two stories that were read. The writing of extensions to stories was mentioned by a few teachers as a method of including writing related to literature in the student portfolios. However, one middle school teacher mentioned that extensions were used only if a student expressed a specific desire to use that approach. One high school teacher listed a variety of literature-based writing by students including dialogues with authors, dialogues with characters, sequels, reflections on the literature read, and parodies or modeling of an author's style.

Another important issue of portfolio use which surfaced through the telephone conversations was the changing nature of the portfolios. Those teachers who had used portfolios for more than a year indicated that they were planning to make changes for the upcoming year. These teachers approached portfolio use as they would approach an area of instruction. They evaluated the effectiveness of the approach and made revisions in order to make it even more effective next year.

Another important issue which was addressed indirectly in the survey questions, but highlighted through the telephone conversations with teachers was the area of student control over their own work and what was to be included in the portfolio. Several teachers indicated that the portfolio approach worked better when they relinquished some control and gave more control to the students.

Summary and Concluding Remarks

By 1991, the concept of using portfolios of student work for assessment purposes had been widely discussed. However, portfolios were only beginning to be used in grades 7-12 for language arts assessment. From the information provided for this survey by state/province education department testing directors, only Quebec was using portfolios for provincewide use in the 1990-91 school year, while Kentucky and Vermont were planning to implement statewide use in the near future. Greater use is being made of portfolios at the classroom level. In a few situations, portfolios are being used at the school and district level. In most of these cases, whether it be in a state, province, district, school, or classroom, portfolio use is a relatively recent occurrence and continues to evolve.

There is little universality in the manner in which portfolios are being used. Written work was the basic component for all the portfolios described in the survey. Writing as a response to literature was a component of about 25% of the portfolio programs in the survey. The amount of writing in relation to literature varied from one piece to the majority of pieces collected for the portfolios. The number depended largely on the course and purpose for using a portfolio. Occasionally portfolios included other components of the language arts such as reading or speaking. In general, assessment by the use of portfolios exemplified program goals which stress active learning. Students were allowed to demonstrate they are risk-takers, decision-makers, and reflective learners through the use of portfolios. The use of portfolios also offered students and teachers an opportunity to see growth over a period of time.

The fact that most portfolios focussed on writing and that risk-taking was important may seem contradictory since writing is often judged on conventional terms. It is clear from the interviews that teachers and supervisors value discussion, talk, and other "reflective" activities, but are unsure how to deal with it in assessment.

The use of portfolios for assessment purposes is often more difficult than the use of ready-made multiple-choice tests or essays from textbooks. Therefore, it involves a commitment by teachers to the process. A portfolio assessment program is often more time consuming and more difficult to manage, than other assessment techniques, but the variety of benefits is also significant.

When asked to share the most important thing he learned about portfolio assessment, Jim Villano, the Fairbanks, Alaska language arts specialist offered this advice: "Every portfolio is different; there is no one packaged portfolio that everyone should follow. Decide on [such things as] purpose, grade level, and intent. Support for teachers to go through the process is central."

References

Archbald, D. A., & Newman, F. M. (1988). Beyond standardized testing: Authentic academic achievement in the secondary school. Reston, VA: NASSP Publications.

Belanoff, P., & Dickson, M. (1991). Portfolios: Process and products. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Brody, P., DeMilo, C., & Purves, A. (1989). The current state of assessment in literature. (Report Series 3.1) Albany, NY: National Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature.

Buell, N. (1991). "At first they thought it was an animal we were going to feed" or developing authentic assessment. Juneau, AK: Department of Education.

Johnston, P., Weiss, P., & Afflerbach, P. (1990). Teachers' evaluations of teaching and learning in literacy and literature. (Report Series 3.4) Albany, NY: National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning.

Jongsma, K. S. (1989, December). Portfolio assessment. The Reading Teacher, 79, 29-34.

New Zealand Department of Education. (1989). Assessment for better writing. Wellington, New Zealand: Author.

Purves, A., Li, H., & Shirk, M. (1990). Prototype measures of the domain of learning in literature. (Report Series 3.3) Albany, NY: National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning.

Shepard, L. A. (1989). Why we need better assessments. Educational Leadership, 46, 4-9.

Simmons, J. (1990). Portfolios as large-scale assessment. Language Arts, 67, 262-268.

Wiggins, G. (1989). A true test: Toward more authentic and equitable assessment. Phi Delta Kappan, 70, 703-713.

Appendix 1
Interview Schedule

1. State or Entity:

2. Name and Title of Interviewee:

3. Date of Interview:

4. Is there a statewide assessment or testing program for secondary school students (Grades 7-12) in the language arts? If yes, in which grades?

5. Are portfolios used as part of the statewide assessment in the language arts?

   If yes, go on to #8.

   If portfolios are not part of the statewide assessment, answer questions 6 and 7.

6. If no, at what levels are portfolios being used?

   District level

   School level

   Classroom level

7. Can you give me the names of 4 districts or schools that I might contact concerning the use of portfolios?

   Name of contact person

   Name of school or district

   Address

   Phone number

   Brief description of how they are using portfolios

   (Space left for 4 replies)

8. Forms and Uses of Assessment

   a. What areas of the language arts are included in the portfolio?

   b. What does the portfolio contain?

   c. How many pieces are included?

   d. Who selects the pieces?

   e. How are they rated or scored?

   f. What happens to the results?

   g. How is the portfolio related to other tests such as standardized tests and classroom tests?

9. Relation to objectives

   a. How did you determine that a portfolio was useful?

   b. How is it related to program goals?

   c. How is the portfolio used to help teach writing and literature?

   d. Is it primarily for student assessment?

      If so, how is growth or progress determined?

   e. Is it primarily used for program assessment?

      If so, how are strengths and weaknesses determined?

10. Could you please send any descriptive literature or samples.

We will send you a copy of the results of our survey.

Appendix 2
List of Respondents to the Survey

James Allen - Upper Arlington, Ohio
Frances Auville - Princeton, West Virginia
John Beamer - Eloy, Arizona
Carole Bertisch - Mamaroneck, New York
Barbara Bollefer - Florissant, Missouri
Marcia Dickson - Marion, Ohio
Ellen Elliot - Coppermine, Northwest Territory
Patricia Fenske - Selkirk, Manitoba
Patty Foster - Edmond, Oklahoma
Lorraine Gerhart - Elm Grove, Wisconsin
Paul Gregoire - North Andover, Massachusetts
Karen Guenther - Winnipeg, Manitoba
Carol Harriman - Sparks, Nevada
John Hennelly - Old Saybrook, Connecticut
Carol Hertz - Cedarsburg, Wisconsin
Don Humbertson - Annandale, Virginia
Cindy Jividen - New Cumberland, West Virginia
Sylvia Jones - Larkspur, California
Kathleen Jongsma - San Antonio, Texas
Ann Mahan - New Albany, Indiana
Carol McCabe - Bay Village, Ohio
Howard Moon - Kenosha, Wisconsin
Ruby Irene Myers - Osseo, Wisconsin
Casey Normandin - Centreville, Missouri
Ellen Oberfelder - Baltimore, Maryland
Diane Panozzo - Cheyenne, Wyoming
Helen Poole - South Orange/Maplewood, New Jersey
Stevi Quate - Brighton, Colorado
Jan Reynolds - Salt Lake City, Utah
Jerry Reynolds - Rochester, Minnesota
Linda Rief - Durham, New Hampshire
Barbara Rosenstock - Hagerstown, Maryland
Paul Schwarz - New York City, New York
Joy Seybold - Lafayette, Indiana
Jay Simmons - Madburg, New Hampshire
Faith Stevens - Haslett, Michigan
Betty Swiggett - Hampton, Virginia
Jim Villano - Fairbanks, Alaska
Kerry Weinbaum - Bronx, New York
Jerry Wilson - Big Piney, Wyoming
Van Young - Elkhart, Indiana

Appendix 3
Summary Data for Phase One

State/ Province	State Program	Grades	Portfolios	Comments
Alabama	Yes	8,9,11,12	No	
Alaska	Yes	8,10	No*	collaborated with 6 districts
Arizona	Yes	7-12	No	
Arkansas	Yes	7,8,10	No	
California	No	----	No*	pilot tested
Colorado	Yes	----	No	every 3 years
Connecticut	Yes	8	No	
Delaware	Yes	8,10,11	No	
D.C.	Yes	7-12	No	
Florida	Yes	10	No	
Georgia	Yes	7-10	No	
Hawaii	Yes	10	No	
Idaho	Yes	8,11	No	
Illinois	Yes	8,11	No	
Indiana	Yes	8,9,11	No*	worked with pilot schools
Iowa	No	----	No	
Kansas	No	----	No	
Kentucky	No	----	No*	in the future
Louisiana	Yes	7,9,10	No	

Maine	Yes	8,11	No	
Maryland	Yes	9	No	
Massachusetts	Yes	8,9,12	No	
Michigan	Yes	7,10	No	
Minnesota	No	----	No*	pilot tested
Mississippi	No	----	No	
Missouri	Yes	9,10	No	
Montana	Yes	11	No	
Nebraska	No	----	No	
Nevada	Yes	9,11	No	
New Hampshire	Yes	10	No	
New Jersey	Yes	8,9,11	No	
New Mexico	Yes	10,11,12	No	
New York	Yes	9,11	No	
N. Carolina	Yes	9	No	
N. Dakota	Yes	8,11	No	
Ohio	Yes	9	No	
Oklahoma	Yes	7,9,10,11	No	
Oregon	Yes	8,11	No	
Pennsylvania	Yes	8,9	No	
Puerto Rico	Yes	7-12	No	
Rhode Island	Yes	8,10	No	
S. Carolina	Yes	7-11	No	

S. Dakota	Yes	8,11	No	
Tennessee	Yes	7,8,10,11	No	
Texas	Yes	7,9,11	No	
Utah	Yes	8,11	No*	funding multi-level portfolio project
Vermont	No	-----	No*	pilot tested
Virginia	Yes	11	No	
Washington	Yes	11	No	
W. Virginia	Yes	8-11	No	
Wisconsin	No	----	No	
Wyoming	No	----	No	
Alberta	Yes	12	No	
British Columbia	Yes	7,10	No	
Manitoba	No	----	No*	starting in grade 11 (1991)
New Brunswick	Yes	12	No	
Northwest Territories	Yes	12	No	
Quebec	Yes	11	Yes	
Ontario	No	----	No*	small sample in grade 12 (1991)
Saskatchewan	No	----	No	